

**George Washington to Congress, February 14, 1791,
Message, from the Works of Thomas Jefferson in
Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited
by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**DRAFT FOR PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONCERNING NEGOTIATIONS WITH GREAT
BRITAIN¹ J. MSS.**

¹ The message as sent is in the *Annals*, ii, 1757.

[Feb. 14, 1791.]

Gentlemen of the Senate & of the House of representatives.

Soon after I was called to the administration of the government, I found it important to come to an understanding with the court of London on several points interesting to the U. S. and particularly to know whether they were disposed to enter into arrangements, by mutual consent, which might fix the commerce between the two nations on principles of reciprocal advantage. For this purpose I authorized informal conferences with their Ministers; and from these I do not infer any disposition on their part to enter into any arrangements merely commercial. I have thought it proper to give you this information, as it might at some time have influence on matters under your consideration.²

² Here follows a paragraph that is struck out, as follows: "*Gentlemen of the Senate:*

For your further and more particular information, I lay before you the instructions I gave to Mr. Gouverneur Morris (the person whom I employed as being on the spot, without giving him any public character) and those"

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Gentlemen of the Senate:

Conceiving that in the possible event of a refusal of justice on the part of Gr. Britain, we should stand less committed should it be made to a private rather than to a public person, I employed Mr. Gouv. Morris, who was on the spot, & without giving him any definite character, to enter informally into the conferences before mentioned. For your more particular information I lay before you the instructions I gave him, and those parts of his communications wherein the British Ministers appear either in conversation or by letter. These are, two letters from the D. of Leeds to Mr. Morris, and three letters of Mr. Morris giving an account of two conferences with the D. of Leeds, & one with him & Mr. Pitt. The sum of these is that they declare without scruple they do not mean to fulfil what remains of the treaty of peace to be fulfilled on their part, (by which we are to understand the delivery of the posts & payment for property carried off,) till performance on our part, & compensation where the delay has rendered performance now impracticable: that on the subject of a treaty of commerce they avoided

direct answers so as to satisfy Mr. Morris they did not mean to enter into one unless it could be extended to a treaty of Alliance offensive & defensive, or unless in the event of a rupture with Spain.

As to the sending a Minister here, they made excuses in the first conference, seem disposed to it in the second, and in the last express an intention of so doing.

Their views being thus sufficiently ascertained, I have directed Mr. Morris to discontinue his communications with them.